

Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
78th Board Meeting
16th May 2008
Bready Ulster-Scots Centre, Bready, Strabane

Present: Mark Thompson
Aileen Douglas
William Roulston
William Leathem
William Humphrey
Jackie Reed

In attendance: George Patton
Jim Millar
Michael McCullough

Recording Secretary: Lyndsey Hanna

1. Welcome from the Chairman

Mr Thompson welcomed everyone to the 78th Board meeting. He thanked Mr Kee and the Bready Ulster-Scots groups for hosting this meeting in their new building.

2. Apologies

Apologies were accepted from:

Mrs Angela Graham
Dr Ian Adamson

3. Minutes of last Meeting (21.04.08)

The Board accepted the minutes of the previous meeting with the exception of some minor amendments.

Proposed and agreed; that the minute be accepted.

4. Matters Arising

Corporate Identity

The new logo is being tested in colour print. Copies will be sent to all Board members early next week.

Meeting with Bushmills

Agency development workers are working with the group to source alternative funding for the salary of a project officer. The Bushmills group will be submitting a new application to the Agency for funding to run Ulster-Scots projects and events.

Milwaukee Irish Fest

Mr McCullough outlined the costs to send two representatives on behalf of the Agency to run workshops at this festival. Total cost for this project would be £5,000.

The Board suggested that in addition 2 other Agency staff/Board members attend so that the Agency is able to measure the effectiveness of this project.

Proposed and agreed.

The Chair asked if the Executive had spoken with members from DCAL re: blockages they seem to be pending on the Agency. This is work in progress.

The Board were in agreement that if no decision had been received from DCAL on the proposed projects with Straightforward Productions and Ulster Historical Foundation, then a letter is to be sent regarding these issues.

The Board raised the issue on the expansion of the current Board. The Board were advised that this issue had been raised through the St.Andrew's Review and we awaited their Report.

Mr McCullough gave the Board an update on the Balmoral Agricultural Show. He did write to DCAL as requested and he received a reply via email stating that he had already received full information on how the decision had been made previously.

The Northern Ireland International Horse Show representatives attended the Balmoral Show and distributed Ulster-Scots Agency information on the Agency's behalf.

5. Chairman's Report

The Chairman listed the events he had attended and the organisations he had been in contact with since the last meeting:

- BBC Northern Ireland meeting following their announcement of £400K per annum for the next three years to be invested in Ulster-Scots programming, online, radio and television
- Irish News front page article published Monday 12th May making false allegations about the Agency funding a "UVF-linked band". The Chair briefed the Board on his discussions with the Press Complaints Commission and proposed that the Agency take the issue to the PCC as the Irish News had not issued a sufficient retraction and apology.
- Ulster Scots Heritage Council event at Andersonstown Library
- Lecture on Hamilton & Montgomery to Dromara Local History Group
- Further work on The Covenanters in Ulster project

Mr Thompson tabled the articles that were published on the Agency in the Irish News and Irish times. He advised the Board that he had contacted the Press Complaints Commission regarding the article printed in the Irish News. The Board were in agreement to proceed with this line of enquiry.

Mr James Kee, Development Officer for the West gave the Board a presentation on his work to date.

The Ulster-Scots Heritage Council gave the Board a presentation of the work to date at the Council followed by a short video of their work.

6. Report from Executive

Executive informed the Board that the post for Director of Culture would not be advertised until the Staff Review at the Agency is completed.

BDS have been appointed to carry out this review after tender process was completed. Board were in agreement that a sub committee should be sent up from within Board members to help advise BDS on the structure of the Agency in the future. Mr Thompson volunteered to participate. Other members are to advise the Executive via email with their intentions early next week.

Board members queried the reference to an NIAO Management letter. The Executive informed that this contains information to be addressed by the Agency after a NIAO audit takes place and would be on the Agenda for the next Audit Committee and the June Board meeting.

7. Budget and Business Plan

The Board queried the payments to the NIAO. Executive informed the Board that it occurred because the Agency was billed for two consecutive audit reports in one accounting year. Had the Agency been given approval from DCAL to carry out accrual accounting, money from the previous years' financial year would have been carried over to allow for this extra expenditure.

The Board were in agreement that all community groups that apply to the Agency for funding should be made aware of ALL changes made to the financial assistance scheme as they occur in the future.

10. Grants and Appeals

(1) York Island Arts and Heritage Group – Appeal

Proposal:	£6180 of £10,110
	A similar proposal came to the previous meeting as part of the Festival funding tranche. However due to a lack of funding the organisation has cut back on the scale of their proposal The Board had previously awarded £6,635 against a total expenditure of £18,715. The Ulster Scots elements have essentially been retained.

It was proposed that this group receive £6,635 as previously agreed.

Proposed and agreed.

(2) Maiden City Festival

Proposal:	
	This application was received on 12th May. It is therefore out with the period designated for Festival funding. Additionally we have already committed to the Foyle Ulster Scots Festival which is running at the same time.

The Board declined this application due to it being outside the period of tranche funding.

(3) Gig N the Bann - Appeal

Proposal:	
	This application was considered at the last meeting as part of the Festival tranche funding. An appeal has been received advising that the application incorrectly stated that this was a competition (page 5 of the original application). However the listed income and expenditure also refers to “admission to Pipe Band Contest” and “judges” fees

After discussion the Board were in agreement to fund this event with £2,000.

Proposed and agreed.

(4) East Donegal Ulster-Scots Association

Proposal:	
	This was before the Board at the last meeting and it was agreed to proceed via written procedures on receipt of further information. Figures relating to this application have been received.

Mrs Reed left the meeting at this point.

The Board were in agreement to fund this event €13,340.

Proposed and agreed.

Mrs Reed returned to the meeting.

(5) Royal Scottish County Dance Association

Proposal:	£6715 of £6715
	The aim is to promote dance and the interest of Scottish Country Dance throughout Ulster and beyond its shores. This is a one day event.

As this is an educational project the Board were in agreement to fund this group with 100% funding as proposed - £6,715.

Proposed and agreed.

(6) Stephenstown Pond Trust

Proposal:	€14,298 of €14,848
	This project is for young people both North and South of the border on the island of Ireland to provide a better understanding of the Ulster-Scots culture.

The Board were in agreement to fund this group with 100% funding as proposed - €14,298. This project will promote the Ulster-Scots Agency in the North and South of the island of Ireland.

Proposed and agreed.

(7) Minutes of the Antrim Ministers, 1654 - 1658

Proposal:	
	This document proposed a six month project for a research assistance. The project focuses on the preparation for a scholarly edition and ongoing digital curation of the "Minutes of the Antrim Minister".

Dr Douglas left the meeting at this point.

The Board were in agreement to fund this group with 100% funding as proposed - €2,000.

Proposed and agreed.

(8) Language Diversity in Schools Programme

The Board were in agreement that Mr Millar is to follow up on further information and feedback at the next meeting.

SPONSORSHIP

(1) North Media Group

The Board declined to support this application.

At this point Mr Millar advised the Board that the Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies needed an academic representative from the Board to sit on the Management Committee at the College. Board are to forward their participation to Mr Thompson next week.

11. Business Plan 2009

The Executive are waiting instruction from NSMC regarding timetabling. A draft Business Plan for 2009 will be circulated and the Board are to send their feedback on this to Mr Patton.

12. Staffing

The Educational Officer post at the Agency has been advertised.

SEUPB

The funding for this project has been extended until 31st July 2008. Mrs Kathy Kelly from SEUPB is concerned re: Long Term Sick. She has advised Executive that contract of those on long term sick will be terminated on 31st May 2008 as of the original project completion date. The Board were in agreement with her outlined proposals.

Proposed and Agreed.

Office Accommodation

The Executive are waiting approval from the Solicitor to sign the contract on the new premises.

There are 12 months left on the current lease worth £13,000. The Solicitor will be negotiating with the landlord to have this reduced as the building is not fit for purpose.

13. AOB

David Healy Fitba Day

Total cost for this project will be £25,000. This is just 40% of last year's costs.

East/West Project

A display of this project will take place on Thursday 4th June 2008 at the Iveagh Cinema. Board are to let Mr Millar know if they wish to receive tickets for this event.

Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies

The Board asked for a presentation from the Institute. Board were in agreement that the Executive should give them a presentation first before the Institute to give background to that the Agency expectations and agreement with the Institute are.

Summer Schools

The residential for the Summer Schools will take place on 23/24th May 2008.

After Schools Clubs

These are continuing to run successfully.

Community Radio

Three Ulster-Scots Community groups will be delivering radio stations this year. All stations should be self sustaining as they have been given a target of £2,000 advertising space to achieve.

Young Ambassadors Convention

Four of the twelve candidates have Ulster-Scots interests. The Agency will be working closely with them. A timetable of the programme is to be arranged to assist the students when they are here.

NSMC Meeting

This meeting was postponed again. Mr Thompson and Mr Patton are waiting for a new proposed date.

Cruise Ships

The Agency will be delivering entertainment at the dock side with ten Cruise Ship dock at the Port of Belfast. Press is to be arranged.

Changes to Financial Assistance Scheme

It was noted that a change to the Financial Assistance Scheme is needed. A new clause is to be added to the conditions of a Constitution to allow individuals to apply for funding.

Markethill Showcase

Mr Humphrey represented the Agency at this event. It was a fantastic event and he wished that this be noted.

Agency PR

Mr Thompson informed the Board that the Agency is potentially missing out on a lot of PR. Ms Gilmore the PR representative at the Agency is currently overloaded with work requests. He suggested that the Agency may need to look at a possible contract with a PR Agency externally to assist with this.

14. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on 13th June 2008 in Belfast. Venue to be confirmed.

Signed:

Dates: